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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Fortieth session
11-22 March 1996
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women:

   (a) Mandate, methods of work and multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women;

   (b) Review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system;

   (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern:

   (i) Poverty;

   (ii) Women and the media;

   (iii) Child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women.

4. Communications concerning the status of women.

5. Elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. Provisional agenda for the forty-first session of the Commission.

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fortieth session.

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Annotations

Item 1. Election of officers

1. Rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council provides that, at the commencement of the first meeting of a regular session, the Commission shall elect, from among the representatives of its members, a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and such other officers as may be required. At past sessions, the Commission has elected, in addition to a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

2. In resolution 1987/21, the Economic and Social Council recommended that, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Commission, the officers elected to the bureau of the Commission should serve for a term of office of two years. The Commission will be required to elect a new bureau at the present session. The officers elected will serve during the fortieth and forty-first sessions.

Item 2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

3. Rule 7 of the rules of procedure provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, after the election of its officers, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda.

4. In resolution 1987/22 on measures to strengthen the role and functions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided to structure the agenda for future sessions of the Commission around its functions, namely programming, coordination, monitoring and policy development. At its thirty-ninth session, the Commission decided to include an item on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in the provisional agenda for its fortieth session.

5. The provisional agenda and documentation for the fortieth session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in decision 1995/252. In the light of the decisions taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/203 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Bureau of the Commission met on 30 January, 2 February and 6 February 1996 to consider the agenda and organization of work for the session. On the basis of extensive discussions, the Bureau decided to propose a restructured provisional agenda so that the Commission could focus on the aspects of its work that were mandated by the General Assembly as a result of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The present document contains the provisional agenda proposed by the Bureau. The annotations reflect the decisions taken by the Bureau.

6. The Bureau, in an effort to make more efficient use of the time available to the Commission, decided to include in the organization of work a series of dialogues on the implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern, with expert panels and with organizations of the United Nations system, from which Governments could derive action-oriented agreed conclusions. The proposed organization of work for the session is contained in the annex below.

7. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/69, the Commission will have before it a note by the Secretariat on the status of documentation for the session.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the status of documentation for the session (E/CN.6/1996/L.1)

Item 3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

8. The Bureau of the Commission has proposed that the central focus of the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women should be follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The agenda has been arranged to deal systematically with those issues concerning follow-up that were raised by the General Assembly, as well as those that were included in the provisional agenda approved by the Economic and Social Council in decision 1995/252.

(a) Mandate, methods of work and multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women

9. The General Assembly, in resolution 50/203, decided that the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with their respective mandates and with Assembly resolution 48/162 and other relevant resolutions, should constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that would play the primary role in overall policy-making and follow-up, and in coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action. It invited the Economic and Social Council to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, taking into account the Platform for Action as well as the need for synergy with all other related commissions and conference follow-up. It decided that the Commission on the Status of Women should have a central role in the monitoring, within the United Nations system, of the implementation of the Platform for Action and in advising the Council thereon. It requested the Commission to develop its multi-year programme of work for the period 1996-2000 at its fortieth session so that it could review the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action, and to consider how it could integrate into its programme of work the follow-up to the Conference and how it could develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities. The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/CN.6/1996/2)

(b) Review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

10. Also in resolution 50/203, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its fifty-first

session on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements. The Commission will have before it the requested report.

System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women

11. By resolution 1993/16, the Council endorsed the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 as a general framework for the coordination of system-wide efforts; requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to arrange for a revision of the system-wide medium-term plan after the Platform for Action and the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had been adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women; and decided that the Commission on the Status of Women, together with the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should be given the responsibility for monitoring progress on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women.

12. The Commission will have before it a draft of the proposed revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001.

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

13. In accordance with the relevant regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and methods of evaluation, the Commission will have before it draft proposals on the subprogramme on advancement of women of the programme on policy coordination and sustainable development.

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

14. In resolution 1995/28 on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council urged the Secretary-General to implement fully the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000), noting that his visible commitment was essential to the achievement of the targets set by the General Assembly; and also urged him to accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts and within those parts of the United Nations system and the specialized agencies where representation of women was considerably below the average.

15. In resolution 50/164, the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to implement the strategic plan of action and to fulfil his target of having women hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000; urged him to continue his work on improving the work practices and environment within the United Nations system, and to increase the number of women employed in the Secretariat from developing countries; requested him to ensure that equal employment opportunities existed for all staff; also requested him to enable the Focal Point for Women within the Secretariat

effectively to monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan of action; and further requested him, in accordance with the relevant rules on the delivery timetable for documentation, to ensure that a progress report on the status of women in the Secretariat was submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session.

16. The Commission will have before it the requested report.

Mainstreaming women's human rights

17. In resolution 39/5, the Commission stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights to ensure that the United Nations human rights mechanisms addressed on a regular basis violations of the human rights of women and that the Commission on the Status of Women regularly took stock of that integration process while carrying out its central role of monitoring activities relating to the status of women. It requested the Secretary-General, taking into account the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to see to the preparation of a joint work plan on the human rights of women for the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women on an annual basis and to inform both the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women at their annual sessions, beginning in 1995, of the plans to facilitate the mainstreaming of the human rights of women, in the context of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. It requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its annual session in 1996, on the implementation of the resolution. The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolution as well as a report on the joint work plan.

18. In addition, the Commission will have before it extracts from the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its fifteenth session.

Violence against women, including migrant women workers

19. In resolution 39/7, the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its fortieth session a copy of his report to the General Assembly on violence against women migrant workers, which should include the reports to be submitted by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, the Centre for Human Rights, relevant United Nations functional bodies and organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session will be made available to the Commission. In addition, the Commission will have before it a note updating the information contained in that report.

20. In resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information regarding its activities to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Human Rights. It also

requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information on the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Human Rights. The Commission will be provided with such information.

Palestinian women

21. In resolution 1995/30 on Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The report of the Secretary-General on this question will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements (E/CN.6/1996/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on progress in improving the status of women in the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1996/7)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/1996/8)

Report of the Secretary-General on the extent to which violations of women's human rights have been addressed by human rights mechanisms (E/CN.6/1996/9)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting information provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 (E/CN.6/1996/11)

Note by the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (E/CN.6/1996/12)

Report of the Secretary-General on the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights (E/CN.6/1996/13)

Note by the Secretary-General containing draft proposals for the subprogramme on the advancement of women for the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (E/CN.6/1996/14)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the results of the fifteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/1996/CRP.1)

Note by the Secretary-General containing a draft of the proposed revised system-wide medium-term plan for advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2)

Documentation for information

Report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/50/378)

Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/50/691)

(c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

22. In resolution 50/203, the General Assembly requested the Commission to consider how it could integrate into its programme of work the follow-up to the Conference and how it could develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities, taking into account the need for a focused and thematic approach to the review of the Platform for Action and the contribution that could be made by all other functional commissions of the Council.

(i) Poverty

23. Poverty is the first in the list of critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action. By its resolution 48/183, the General Assembly proclaimed 1996 International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. By its decision 1995/321, the Economic and Social Council decided that coordination of the activities of the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty would be the theme for the coordination segment of its substantive session of 1996, and that it would focus on, inter alia, coordination of United Nations efforts to ensure that all its activities for poverty eradication took fully into account the gender perspective.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on issues related to poverty (E/CN.6/1996/CRP.)

(ii) Women and the media

24. In resolution 1990/15, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the priority themes for the thirty-seventh to fortieth sessions of the Commission. For the fortieth session, the Council included in the list of priority themes the elimination of stereotyping in the mass media. This theme is directly related to women and the media, the critical area of concern addressed in chapter IV, section J, of the Platform for Action. The report on the priority theme, emphasizing measures to address the critical area of concern, will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of stereotyping in the mass media (E/CN.6/1996/4)

(iii) Child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women

25. In resolution 1990/15, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the priority themes for the thirty-seventh to fortieth sessions of the Commission. For the fortieth session, the Council included in the list of priority themes child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women. The issue of child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women is found in many parts of the Platform for Action and was intended to be a theme that would cut across various sections of the Platform. The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme, emphasizing the relationship with the relevant critical areas of concern. The Commission will also have before it the report of the Secretary-General on education for peace.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women (E/CN.6/1996/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on education for peace (E/CN.6/1996/6)

Item 4. Communications concerning the status of women

26. In resolution 76 (V) of 5 August 1947, the Economic and Social Council established a procedure by which the Commission on the Status of Women would handle communications relating to the status of women. In resolution 304 I (XI) of 14 and 17 July 1950, the Council amended resolution 76 (V) and requested the Secretary-General to compile, before each session of the Commission, a list of confidential and non-confidential communications, containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication.

27. In resolution 1983/27, the Council reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission to consider confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women, and authorized the Commission to appoint a working group to consider such communications and prepare a report thereon for the Commission.

28. In resolution 1993/11, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed that the Commission on the Status of Women was empowered to make recommendations to the Economic and Social Council on what action should be taken on emerging trends and patterns of discrimination against women revealed by such communications.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the confidential list of communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/1996/S.W. Communications List No. 30)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the non-confidential list of communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/1996/CR.32)

Item 5. Elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

29. In resolution 1995/29, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women should establish an in-session open-ended working group for a two-week period at its fortieth session to consider a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General, including a synthesis, on the views of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on an optional protocol to the Convention. The requested report will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General containing the views of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/1996/10 and Add.1)

Item 6. Provisional agenda for the forty-first session of the Commission

30. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1894 (LVII), the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its forty-first session, with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each agenda item and the legislative authority for their preparation, in order to enable the Commission to consider those documents from the point of view of their contribution to the work of the Commission, and of their urgency and relevance in the light of the current situation.

Item 7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fortieth session

31. In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its session.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Week of 11-15 March 1996

Monday, 11 March

a.m.		Opening of the session
	Item 1	Election of officers
	Item 2	Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
	Item 3	Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
p.m.*	Item 3	General discussion

Tuesday, 12 March

a.m.*	Item 3	Continuation of general discussion
p.m.*	Item 3	Continuation of general discussion

Wednesday, 13 March

a.m.*	Item 3 (c)	Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern: Poverty Panel of experts: presentation and dialogue
p.m.*	Item 3 (c)	Dialogue with representatives of organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions

Thursday, 14 March

a.m.*	Item 3 (c)	Dialogue among Governments
p.m.*	Item 3 (c)	Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern: Women and the media Panel of experts: presentation and dialogue

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* The meeting of the in-session open-ended working group of the Commission to elaborate a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women will be held simultaneously with the plenary meeting.

Friday, 15 March

a.m.* Item 3 (c) Dialogue among Governments

p.m.* Item 3 (c) Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern: Child and dependant care, including sharing of responsibilities between men and women

Panel of experts: presentation and dialogue

Week of 18-22 March

Monday, 18 March

a.m. Item 3 (c) Dialogue among Governments

p.m.* Item 3 Informal consultations

6 p.m. Deadline for submission of draft proposals on item 3

Tuesday, 19 March

a.m.* Item 3 Informal consultations

p.m.* Item 3 Informal consultations

Wednesday, 20 March

a.m.* Item 4 Closed meeting of the Commission to consider the report of the Working Group on Communications, followed by:

Item 3 Conclusion of general discussion

p.m.* Item 3 Informal consultations

Thursday, 21 March

a.m.* Item 3 Informal consultations

p.m.* Items 3 and 5 Introduction of draft proposals, followed by:

p.m. Informal consultations on all outstanding issues, if necessary

Friday, 22 March

a.m. and p.m.		Action on draft proposals and on the proposed agreed conclusions on item 3 (c)
p.m.	Item 6	Provisional agenda for the forty-first session of the Commission
	Item 7	Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fortieth session
		Closure of the session

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Fortieth session
11-22 March 1996
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Mandate, methods of work and multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

At its thirty-ninth session, the Commission on the Status of Women requested a report by the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. In its resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council to strengthen the mandate of the Commission and requested the Commission to develop a multi-year programme of work and consider how it could integrate into its programme of work the follow-up to the Conference and how it could develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities. The report discusses the mandate of the Commission, possible improvements in its method of work and proposes a multi-year programme of work.

* E/CN.6/1996/1.

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CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 2	3
I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS	3	3
II. MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION	4 - 9	4
III. STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION'S AGENDA	10 - 14	5
IV. MULTI-YEAR WORK PLAN	15 - 20	7
A. Implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern	16	7
B. Emerging issues	17	9
C. Review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system	18 - 20	9
V. ORGANIZATION OF WORK	21 - 25	10

INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly decided that the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with their respective mandates and with Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and other relevant resolutions, should constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that would play the primary role in the overall policy-making and follow-up, and in coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action. It invited the Economic and Social Council to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, taking into account the Platform for Action as well as the need for synergy with all other related commissions and conference follow-up. It decided that the Commission on the Status of Women should have a central role in the monitoring, within the United Nations system, of the implementation of the Platform for Action and in advising the Council thereon. It requested the Commission to develop its multi-year programme of work for the period 1996-2000 at its fortieth session so that it might review the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and to consider how it could integrate into its programme of work the follow-up to the Conference and how it could develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities.

2. At its fortieth session, the Commission should review its mandate, programme of work and organization of work in order to take decisions and make recommendations on how best it can follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women. This report is intended to assist in the Commission's deliberations.

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3. It can be assumed that from 1996 through 2000, the main focus of work of the Commission on the Status of Women will be follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In determining its specific follow-up role, the Commission may wish to take into account a number of general considerations, including:

(a) Its role as a functional subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council in which it provides advice to the Council in the form of recommendations contained in Commission resolutions and in the form of draft resolutions for action by the Council;

(b) The role of the Council in coordinating United Nations system activities in the economic and social sectors and in integrating follow-up to recent United Nations conferences;

(c) Standing mandates of the Commission on the Status of Women which, while closely related to the implementation of the Platform for Action, predate the Fourth World Conference on Women, especially in the area of human rights;

(d) The limited time available for meetings of the Commission, now normally set at eight working days per annual session;

(e) The need to involve organizations of the United Nations system and of civil society in the work of the Commission, since recommendations in the Platform for Action are addressed to them.

II. MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION

4. The Commission's current mandate is based on the original mandate given in Economic and Social Council resolution 2 (II) of 21 June 1946 as modified by Council resolution 48 (IV) of 29 March 1947:

> "The functions of the Commission shall be to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields. The Commission shall also make recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights with the object of implementing the principle that men and women shall have equal rights, and to develop proposals to give effect to such recommendations."

5. The basic mandate was supplemented by Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/22 of 26 May 1987, which was a result of the Commission's 1987 session on follow-up to the Nairobi Conference, in which the Council:

> "Decides to expand the terms of reference of the Commission on the Status of Women to include the functions of promoting the objectives of equality, development and peace, monitoring the implementation of measures for the advancement of women, and reviewing and appraising progress made at the national, subregional, regional, sectoral and global levels."

6. Under the terms of General Assembly resolution 50/203, there is to be "a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that will play the primary role in the overall policy-making and follow-up, and in coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action". The Commission is the first tier of the mechanism, which "as a functional commission assisting the Economic and Social Council, shall have a central role in the monitoring, within the United Nations system, of the implementation of the Platform for Action and in advising the Council thereon".

7. The Assembly specified part of the outline of that role when it requested the Commission "to consider how it could integrate into its programme of work the follow-up to the Conference and how it could develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities, taking into account the need for a focused and thematic approach to the review of the Platform for Action and the contribution that can be made by all other functional commissions of the Council".

8. In addition to the existing mandates, this might imply that, through reviewing the implementation of strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern contained in the Platform for Action, the Commission could make substantive recommendations to the Council on trends, emerging issues and new approaches to issues that are being dealt with in the mainstream in terms of the Platform for Action. It would also imply examining the mainstreaming of a

gender perspective in the activities of organizations of the United Nations system as they pertain to the implementation of the Platform for Action, as an input into the wider reviews of coordination and operational activities to be undertaken by the Council.

9. With regard to coordination, it would be important to define a practical approach to examining the extent of mainstreaming, bearing in mind the relative mandates of the Commission and of the Council on coordination. The Commission has, for the purpose of focus, the system-wide medium-term plan on the advancement of women, which, once it has been revised and adopted by the Council, the Commission has been given the responsibility of monitoring together with the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Commission also has the responsibility, under the regulations and rules governing programme planning and budgeting, of reviewing the technical content and consistency of programme plans and proposals of the United Nations itself. It can also, in examining substantive issues related to the Platform, draw conclusions about the consistency and adequacy of system response, which can be brought to the attention of the Council.

III. STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION'S AGENDA

10. In the light of the above considerations, it would be important to maintain a certain degree of flexibility in the agenda for sessions through 2000, particularly in terms of how substantive work is combined for discussion, while agreeing on a consistent structure that corresponds to the mandate. The current agenda structure, adopted in 1987, includes essentially three items: priority themes, programming and coordination matters, and an omnibus item entitled "Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women". Since 1992, the Commission, because of its role as preparatory body for the Conference, has followed a modified agenda, as was also the case for the provisional agenda adopted by the Economic and Social Council for the fortieth session in 1996.

11. By a decision of the Bureau of the Commission on 6 February 1996, the proposed agenda for the fortieth session has been streamlined to reflect the need to focus on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. This approach constitutes a starting-point for examining the agenda for subsequent sessions. In addition to a sub-item on mandate, methods of work and the multi-year programme of work of the Commission, which is applicable only to the fortieth session, the agenda includes sub-items on mainstreaming in the United Nations system and on implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern.

12. Building on this experience, a possible approach to the agenda would be to combine the need for a long-term work programme with a built-in flexibility in the consideration of issues, as well as a clearer specification of what was formerly contained under the omnibus item. The following structure could be suggested:

(a) An item reviewing implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action or parts

thereof on an individual or combined basis. The purpose of that item would be to provide a focused discussion of the issues addressed by the Platform for Action in terms of trends, emerging issues, effective measures and in terms of the consistency of work by organizations of the United Nations system;

(b) An item consisting of issues arising from the discussions of the Council or other intergovernmental bodies on which input from the Commission is considered important, including its review of trends, emerging issues and, to the extent that this is relevant, the coherence of work by organizations of the United Nations system in gender mainstreaming;

(c) An item on enjoyment by women of their human rights, containing work related to the long-standing work of the Commission in the development and monitoring of human rights instruments; the Commission's communication procedure; consideration of how to ensure that the United Nations human rights mechanisms address on a regular basis violations of the human rights of women, in cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights, and regularly take stock of that integration process while carrying out its central role of monitoring activities relating to the status of women, reviewing the joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights; and consideration of relevant information on other rights-based issues such as that provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women on its operational work on violence against women;

(d) An item on review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system emphasizing the system-wide medium-term plan, review of programmes and plans of the United Nations and of matters related to the situation of women in the Secretariat.

13. In order to meet the request of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General to report annually to the Commission on the Status of Women and to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the measures taken and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it could be understood that the entire agenda should be seen in the context of follow-up. The Secretary-General could prepare a comprehensive paper synthesizing all of the items in the Commission's agenda for a given session, with a view to providing Member States with an overview of implementation. In the next stage of reporting, a summary of the results of the Commission's deliberations would be added for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council. The final version of the report, to the Assembly, would add the results of the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council.

14. It is assumed that much of reporting on national and regional experience in implementing the Platform for Action would be dealt with through the consideration of specific issues in the multi-year programme of work. However, at various points a more comprehensive approach could be envisaged, to be incorporated in the report noted in paragraph 13 above. For example, the Platform for Action requests all Member States to prepare national strategies for implementing the Platform for Action by the end of 1996. To the extent that these are provided to the Secretariat, an analysis could be prepared and submitted to the Commission at its session in 1998. Similarly, the third review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of

Women, including of implementation of the Platform for Action, is scheduled for 2000. This should reflect national experience and would normally be based on national reporting.

IV. MULTI-YEAR WORK PLAN

15. At present, the Commission has had a multi-year work plan only for priority themes. However, given the specificity of the Platform and the desirability of programming over a longer period, it would be useful to establish, to the extent possible, a multi-year work plan for those agenda items which have variable substantive themes.

A. Implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern

16. In terms of the Commission's focus on implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern, it would be important to ensure that, over the period 1996-2000, all of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas should be considered, either through the item on implementation or through examination of an emerging issue. It can be assumed, for example, that environment in its widest sense could be dealt with in the context of emerging issues. The table below shows a possible organization of areas for consideration over the period.

Table. Possible schedule for consideration of implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern

Session	Strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas	Comment
Fortieth (1996)	Poverty (A) Women and Media (J)	
Forty-first (1997)	Decision-making (G) Economic decision-making (part of F) Armed conflict decision-making (part of E) Environmental decision-making (part of K)	Combined discussion of all issues related to actions in the Platform designed to increase the participation of women in decision-making
Forty-second (1998)	Women's human rights (I) The girl child (L) Violence against women (D) Rights aspects of armed conflicts (E); poverty (A); economic structure (F); environment (K)	Consolidated consideration of the main rights-based parts of the Platform for Action; and input to review the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
Forty-third (1999)	Education (B) Health (C)	Consolidated consideration of issues related to basic services as inputs for empowerment, including family-planning services; and an input into the five-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

Session	Strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas	Comment
Forty-fourth (2000)	Comprehensive review of entire platform, based on the third review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies	

B. Emerging issues

17. It would be desirable to limit the emerging issues to be discussed each year to two. One could be a comprehensive issue that would be related to the multi-year programme of work of the Council or the General Assembly and could be programmed in advance. The other could be an issue that would be agreed by the Bureau of the Commission on the basis of decisions of the Council or the Assembly. Pending the determination of the Council's multi-year programme, it would be possible to specify only that environment should be considered in 1997 in order to permit an input to the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

C. Review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

18. It can be assumed that the Commission will want to deal with the issue of the status of women in the Secretariat on an annual basis. Under existing mandates, the Commission should also examine programme proposals on advancement of women in 1997 and 1999 and any modifications in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 in 1998.

19. The Commission might decide, in the context of its review of the system-wide medium-term plan, to request a mid-term report on implementation for 1998 and again in 2000 as part of the overall review.

20. During the period, under the terms of General Assembly resolution 50/203, the Economic and Social Council is expected to devote one coordination segment to implementation of the Platform. While the date has not been set, the Commission might consider recommending 1998 as the date, to benefit from the review of the system-wide medium-term plan.

V. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

21. There has been considerable concern in a number of intergovernmental bodies about using methods of work that will make maximum use of the time available during each Commission session. The importance of an interactive method has been stressed and is increasingly being used by the Council and its subsidiaries.

22. For the fortieth session of the Commission, the Bureau has decided, on an experimental basis, to propose that the Commission organize its substantive work on implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern around a sequence of dialogues leading to agreed action-oriented conclusions on the issues concerned. The dialogues would permit Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and members of civil society, to whom action recommendations have been addressed under the Platform, to discuss practical issues of implementation. Under the agreed approach each theme would be dealt with through up to three meetings, based on dialogues, as follows:

(a) The dialogue on the theme would start with an expert panel, which would make presentations on the main issues involved and would respond to questions. The panel composition would vary according to issue, but could normally include an expert appointed by the Secretary-General to present an overview; an expert provided by the organization of the United Nations system most closely associated with the issue; at least two experts from Governments that had a particular expertise or experience in measures related to the issue; and an expert from civil society;

(b) The dialogue would continue with a meeting at which those organizations of the United Nations system working in the issue area, and in some areas a number of organizations of civil society, could make presentations of their perspectives on the issues and respond to comments and questions;

(c) The dialogue would conclude with an informal meeting among government delegations from which agreed conclusions that would be prepared by the Chair could emerge. The draft conclusions could be subject to the usual consultations before their final adoption.

23. At the fortieth session, it was decided that some issues required three dialogues, while others, where coordination issues were less acute, could be dealt with by two dialogues. In future sessions, the allocation of time to dialogues could be done flexibly in terms of both the item on implementation of the strategic objectives and actions in the critical areas of concern and the item on emerging issues.

24. The composition and selection of participants in the expert panel could be decided, inter-sessionally, by the Bureau of the Commission on the basis of proposals by the Secretariat.

25. Finally, as a matter of practice, at most of its sessions since 1990, the Commission has requested provision of services for a working group (or groups) to meet in parallel with the plenary meetings of the Commission. This has facilitated informal negotiations of complex texts. It can be assumed that, in

terms of the work programme of the Commission, in both enjoyment of women's human rights and programming and coordination, it might be desirable to consider requesting at least one parallel working group routinely during sessions from 1997-2000.

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly at its fiftieth session adopted resolution 50/203 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In that resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to report, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements.

2. In his report on implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744) submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, the Secretary-General reiterated his commitment to ensuring that the recommendations addressed to him were implemented swiftly and effectively and to integrating the gender perspective into all aspects of the work of the Organization. He added that he would work with the executive heads of the United Nations specialized agencies and the United Nations programmes and funds to ensure a coordinated system-wide response, integrating the follow-up of this Conference with that of other global conferences. The Secretary-General's report included an analysis of the provisions of the Platform for Action relating to follow-up at the international level and his views and recommendations on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the organizations of the United Nations system for further implementation of these provisions.

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3. The present report contains an update on developments since the fiftieth session of the Assembly. It should be read in conjunction with the Secretary-General's report to the Assembly (A/50/744), as well as related reports before the Commission, including the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1996/CRP.2), the report of the Secretary-General on the mandate, methods of work and multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/1996/2) and the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1996/7).

I. MAINSTREAMING OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

4. In the Platform for Action (see A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1), the Conference invited the Secretary-General "to establish a high-level post in the office of the Secretary-General, using existing human and financial resources, to act as the Secretary-General's adviser on gender issues and to help ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women" (para. 326). In keeping with this invitation, the Secretary-General has designated a senior adviser in his Executive Office to serve as his special adviser on gender issues. The adviser assists the Secretary-General in facilitating coordination to ensure that the gender perspective is integrated into overall policy-making and programming, including in the political area, and is taken into account in all aspects of the work of the system and in furthering organizational links with civil society.

5. In exercising the above-mentioned functions, the adviser will draw upon the expertise and assistance of all existing entities working in this area, including the Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Focal Point on Women in the Department of Administration and Management of the Secretariat and other concerned units within the United Nations, its funds and programmes.

6. An internal meeting of heads of United Nations departments, funds and programmes in New York has already been convened by the Secretary-General's adviser. Agreement was reached on the establishment of three working groups: one focusing on policy and research to be convened by the Division for the Advancement of Women, assisted by INSTRAW; another focusing on operational activities, to be convened by UNIFEM; and the third focusing on the status of women in the United Nations, convened by the Focal Point on Women in the Department of Administration and Management. The Chairpersons of these three working groups will meet with the Secretary-General's adviser on a regular basis to promote effective coordination of policy and mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations proper, including its programmes and funds.

7. Programme and policy coordination at the level of the United Nations system as a whole will be pursued through an inter-agency committee which the

Secretary-General has recommended for establishment by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). He has envisaged an inter-agency committee on the advancement and empowerment of women, chaired by the United Nations through his Special Adviser, which will assist ACC in carrying forward at the system-wide level the broad range of issues covered in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. ACC will act on this proposal when it meets in April. It is intended that the work of this committee, like that of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development, would be closely related to the intergovernmental process. The work programme on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference to be adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its present session will be helpful in guiding the substantive activities of the proposed inter-agency committee.

8. In addition, it is intended that a gender perspective will be fully integrated in the work of the three thematic task forces established by ACC to promote a coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences at the country level. The themes to be addressed by these task forces - social services, employment and the enabling environment - are central to advancing the role and status of women in development.

9. The proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, which is before the Commission, reflects the new orientation and indicative strategy of the Departments and Offices of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the United Nations system as a whole, to implement the Platform for Action.

10. In his report to the General Assembly (A/50/744), the Secretary-General emphasized that effective implementation of the Platform for Action would require existing machinery and institutions to "sharpen their focus, set clear priorities for action, evaluation and coordination, establish accountability mechanisms, and use available resources efficiently" (para. 21), in accordance with chapters V and VI of the Platform for Action. All entities within the United Nations are taking action to respond to these requirements.

11. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development is the principal unit within the United Nations Secretariat dealing with issues relating to the improvement of the status of women. As recalled in the Secretary-General's report, the placement of the Division within that Department by the Secretary-General during the restructuring of the economic and social sectors was aimed at ensuring the integration of gender issues in policy formulation and coordination, including the servicing of the intergovernmental machinery.

12. The Division will continue to work closely with INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The substantive servicing of the Commission on the Status of Women, including the provision of assistance in the introduction of innovations in its procedures, will be a major component of the work of the Division. Likewise, in providing substantive servicing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Division will assist that Committee in its efforts to act as a catalyst in promoting the enjoyment by women of their human rights as a central part of the overall effort for the advancement of the status of women.

In this regard, the Division will collaborate closely with the Centre for Human Rights, including through joint work planning.

13. UNIFEM is taking steps to increase its capacity to provide technical backstopping for the resident coordinator system and for other development activities at the field level in areas relevant to the advancement of women. The capacity of UNIFEM will be fully used to provide effective operational support for follow-up action at the national level in programme countries and to serve as a catalyst in promoting inter-agency coordination at the country level through the resident coordinator system. In response to General Assembly resolution 50/166, UNIFEM is considering the establishment of a trust fund in support of initiatives aimed at the elimination of violence against women. UNIFEM has recently completed a meeting of its Consultative Committee at which it was agreed that it should focus on the economic and political empowerment of women.

14. To strengthen substantive links with INSTRAW, the Secretary-General has designated the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development to serve as his representative on the INSTRAW Board of Trustees, supported by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Board, which met in Santo Domingo from 19 to 23 February 1996 and adopted a work programme for the biennium, stressed several areas in which INSTRAW would intensify its cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM, and other bodies and organizations within the United Nations system.

15. Measures are being taken to strengthen the coordination of activities among UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW, in their respective fields of competence, based on agreed programme priorities and emphasizing, as appropriate, joint activities. In future, the three entities will exchange their proposed programmes of work for comment before submitting them to their respective governing bodies for approval, as one means of identifying areas for joint activities, as well as for streamlining and avoidance of duplication.

16. The Division, UNIFEM and INSTRAW are presently developing a proposal to create a joint space on the World Wide Web of the Internet to disseminate information electronically on global activities to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

17. In the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, efforts are being made to mainstream a gender dimension throughout the work of the United Nations system and, to this end, to provide units responsible for this work with a solid institutional base. The proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, highlights efforts in this regard in the section on institutional arrangements for implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

18. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 50/162, the General Assembly recommended that the interaction between the Commission on the Status of Women, INSTRAW, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, and UNIFEM should be reviewed and rationalized within the context of ongoing efforts to revitalize the Economic and Social Council in

pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women as requested in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 48/111. A timely expression of the views of the Commission in this regard would be of great value.

II. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOLLOW-UP TO THE BEIJING CONFERENCE

19. To enable the Division for the Advancement of Women to fulfil its responsibilities following the Beijing Conference, the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, decided to strengthen the capacity of the Division in the areas of gender-impact analysis, the advancement of the human rights of women, and the promotion of a system-wide approach to the implementation of the Platform for Action, including inter-agency coordination and outreach activities.

20. Efforts will continue to be made to attract support from a variety of sources for UNIFEM and INSTRAW and the other voluntary funds and programmes for their work on gender issues and for the work of the specialized agencies. Further information on financial arrangements for follow-up by the system as a whole is contained in the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001.

III. REGIONAL-LEVEL FOLLOW-UP

21. In paragraph 303 of the Platform for Action the Conference invited the regional commissions to collaborate on gender issues with other regional intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, financial and research institutions and the private sector. In response to the Secretary-General's request that the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions assist in coordinating activities for the follow-up to major United Nations conferences at the regional level, a number of initiatives have been undertaken. For example, the Economic Commission for Europe convened a consultation on gender issues and is examining the possibility of setting up a gender unit to serve as focal point for such issues. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has established an ad hoc interdivisional mechanism to coordinate its activities on women in development and it convened the first meeting of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific on the Advancement of Women attended by 12 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. The Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean have also made provision for concrete follow-up to both the Beijing Conference and the results of the regional preparatory meetings held in advance of the Conference. These efforts will be linked to follow-up to other major conferences in cooperation with other entities at the regional level.

IV. STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ORGANIZATION

22. With respect to the status of women within the United Nations itself, steps have been taken to integrate the measures in the Secretary-General's Strategic Plan of Action for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, 1995-2000 (see A/49/587 and Corr.1 and A/50/691) into the overall human resources strategy for the Organization and to hold all programme managers accountable. Taking into account cost reductions and the mandated increase in vacancy rates as a result of General Assembly resolution 50/215 on the implementation of the 1996-1997 programme budget, the Secretary-General will try nevertheless, to intensify efforts to ensure that every opportunity is taken to recruit and promote women. An update of developments in this regard since the fiftieth session of the General Assembly is before the Commission in the Report of the Secretary General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1996/7).

V. RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

23. In line with the Conference's recommendations to mobilize civil society in promoting effective follow-up to the Beijing Conference, the Economic and Social Council decided on 9 February 1996 to invite all non-governmental organizations that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women to participate on an exceptional basis as observers at the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (decision 1996/208). The future relationship of these non-governmental organizations and those accredited to the World Summit for Social Development with the United Nations will be further discussed by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations when it meets in 1996 in the context of the overall review of the relationship between the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

PRIORITY THEME: EQUALITY

Elimination of stereotyping in the mass media

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-fourth session, selected "Elimination of stereotyping of women in the mass media" as the priority theme under the rubric "Equality" for its fortieth session. The present report discusses changes in the portrayal of women in the media, including the increase in the representation of violence, and considers various measures taken to achieve a more balanced portrayal, building on the recommendations for action contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The report also discusses recent developments in the communications sector, including challenges set by new technologies. Activities carried out by the United Nations are described. Issues that need further clarification and investigation are defined. A distinction is made between changes that can be brought about through measures taken from within existing media structures and those introduced from the outside.

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CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION		1 - 7	3
I.	FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN RELATION TO WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS	8 - 10	5
II.	CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE MEDIA AND THEIR EFFECTS ON WOMEN	11 - 19	5
	A. The challenges of new technologies	13 - 15	6
	B. The media workforce	16 - 17	7
	C. Alternative media	18 - 19	7
III.	CHANGES IN THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN	20 - 29	8
	A. Progress and backlash in gender portrayal	20 - 23	8
	B. Commercials and advertisements	24 - 25	9
	C. Women in politics	26	9
	D. Increase in the representation of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women	27 - 29	10
IV.	MEASURES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AND REMOVING STEREOTYPES	30 - 52	11
	A. Changes from within the media	31 - 36	11
	B. Changes from outside the media	37 - 49	13
	C. Activities in the United Nations system	50 - 52	16
V.	CONCLUDING QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION	53	17

INTRODUCTION

1. In the past several decades, the world has witnessed a revolution in the field of communications - electronic, print, visual and audio. Progress has been made in computer technology, satellite and cable television, and global access to information. New opportunities for the participation of women in the communications media and for the dissemination of information about women have been created. Yet, in spite of all these developments, progress in removing stereotyped representations of women in the media has been slow. With this in mind, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-fourth session, selected "Elimination of stereotyping of women in the mass media" as the priority theme under the rubric "Equality" for its fortieth session.

2. In its early days, the women's movement had at its core a critical attitude towards the mass media, which were held to be deeply implicated in the patterns of discrimination operating against women in society. The critics recognized that the media had the power to change perceptions and attitudes and might be useful instruments in advancing the status of women and fostering equality between men and women. As new means of communication have increased, the media have become some of the most powerful socializing agents in modern society, and their role in either shaping stereotypes or promoting a fair and accurate representation of women is unquestioned. As stated in the Beijing Platform for Action "Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women". 1/

3. Men and women alike are the objects of sex-stereotyping in the media. Women are often represented in archetypal feminine and caring roles or as sex objects. The stereotyped beauty myth attached to them has been most strongly criticized by women who face barriers to their advancement for reasons of race, age, ethnicity and disability. Early critics simply requested the removal of stereotyped portrayals or negative images of women, not taking into account that a value judgement was attached to any critique of so-called negative and positive images. The Beijing Platform for Action reflects new thinking when it states that "Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world". 2/ It asks for a "balanced portrayal of women and girls in their multiple roles" 3/ and encourages the "use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media". 4/

4. The stereotyping of women in the media and the media's influence on public opinion about the role of women have received considerable attention in the work of the United Nations for the advancement of women. The United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-1985) was a catalyst for activities in the field of women and media. UNESCO initiated the first international review and research in this area. The Commission on the Status of Women has long shown an interest in women and the media, starting with the period leading to the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City, in 1975. In 1979, a special rapporteur was appointed to undertake a study on the impact of the mass communications media on the changing roles of men and women; the study was later submitted to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held at Copenhagen in 1980. 5/ It was acknowledged from the beginning

that certain deep-rooted attitudes based on cultural patterns represented serious obstacles to the advancement of women. Technical advances in the mass communications media made it possible to disseminate those attitudes on a large scale. It was already recognized that important measures for change should include monitoring and regulations by Governments in order to advance the participation of women in the media and reinforce the role of the media as integrating agents.

5. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women emphasize the critical role of the media in advancing the status of women and their role in development and call for the elimination of exploitative and stereotyped portrayals of women in various forms of the media, including advertisements. 6/ The approach to women and the media taken in the Strategies was limited in its focus on the alternative media, publicly operated communication networks, and the adverse effects that advertising could have on attitudes towards and among women. Although the Strategies mentioned degrading images of women in articles and programmes disseminated worldwide, it was only in the first review and appraisal of its implementation, in 1990, that a link was established between the portrayal of violence against women in the media and violence against women in the family and society. It was recognized that the perpetuation in the mass media of stereotyped images, in particular the glorification of traditional male and female roles, delayed women's advancement by providing justification for an unequal status quo. In its resolution 1990/15, the Economic and Social Council insisted that Governments should, in conjunction with women's groups, take steps to reduce the stereotyping of women in the mass media, whether by self-policing on the part of the media or by other methods.

6. The second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, in 1995, examined the contribution of the media to women and development, emphasizing the achievements of the alternative media and women's contribution to the mainstream media. It found that the nexus of women, the media and development was finally being recognized as a central element of local, national and international action in research, policy-making, funding and other areas. 7/

7. Building on previous work and the Toronto Platform for Action, 8/ the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, went further when it considered "women and the media" as one of 12 critical areas of concern. The Beijing Platform for Action defines action under two strategic objectives:

(a) To increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication;

(b) To promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

It clearly identifies the various actors - Governments, national and international media systems, national machinery for the advancement of women, non-governmental organizations and media professional associations and the private sector - responsible for action in the field of women's full and equal participation in the media and women's access to and use of new media and in

combating stereotyping. The Beijing Platform takes a strong view of measures to combat stereotyping, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women, and to develop professional guidelines and codes of conduct which should be consistent with freedom of expression. 9/ The present report focuses on the second strategic objective identified in the Platform for Action and discusses measures that can be used to achieve a more balanced, fairer portrayal of women and girls in their multiple roles in society and thus ultimately contribute to change in the portrayal of men and gender relationships.

I. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN RELATION TO WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

8. Any discussion about regulation of media content faces the need to provide for respect of the press and freedom of the press and of expression. The right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers, is contained in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To have the media free of State censorship and repression is acknowledged as a condition of a democratic society.

9. Freedom of the press and women's rights in terms of the media cannot be seen in isolation from one another. If women do not enjoy the same opportunities for access and expression as men, freedom of the press has not been achieved. Women journalists from developing countries have been claiming that there is a link between the suppression of women in the media and the attainment of media freedom as a whole. 10/ In certain countries women's increased participation and visibility in the media, which is a symbol of their growing involvement in the public sphere, has often made them targets of gender-specific violence, intolerance and even terrorism.

10. There is evidence that women journalists working in war zones have brought new insights to mainstream reporting about conflict. Women journalists reporting on the war in the former Yugoslavia, for example, contributed to the worldwide focus on the systematic rape of women in armed conflicts and its recognition as a crime of war.

II. CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE MEDIA AND THEIR EFFECTS ON WOMEN

11. The structure and the functioning of the media have undergone dramatic changes in the past two decades, at various levels. In many of the countries that previously had public, government-run and State-regulated broadcasting, the arrival of new electronic media that can easily transmit messages and programmes across national borders has left national Governments with very limited or no control. Market-based self-regulation and technological developments have made the old media order of regulatory measures, designed by Governments with the intention of ensuring diversity, fairness and the protection of minority interests, obsolete. Many countries have been confronted with a proliferation

of private broadcasting. In the print media, the call for democratization has led to radical changes and an increase in print products in some regions, such as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

12. The information revolution continues to perpetuate many inequalities. If the global information and communication system has turned the world into a "global village", the majority of people around the world are not participating on an equal footing, neither as consumers or producers. The changes may have opened doors for women - in particular in access to information and employment in the media - but inequalities persist, and stereotyped representation has been carried to a global level. The increasing concentration of the media in the hands of a few transnational corporations with global reach which transmit images and print at a planetary scale has brought with it the export of cultural models and their codes, perceptions and prejudices, including gender, cultural and ethnic stereotypes. Info-entertainment images coming from a few developed countries are flooding the most remote areas of the globe. The process of commercialization has had an impact on programme content and quality, and communication forms have been radically changed. Old distinctions between information and entertainment, production and distribution are being eroded. These trends may have a considerable impact on the future of people living in the global village. 11/ Many developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean have raised concerns regarding the images and messages of the transnational networks which often stand in stark contrast to local values and norms and lack social reality and relevance. The public, however - in particular, women - often responds favourably to those images and messages.

A. The challenges of new technologies

13. The boom of new technologies is rapidly transforming traditional means of communication. Among the most important new technologies are computer networks, including visual and print media, which are opening new modalities of communication, permit interactive communication at the local or global level and provide access to distant sources of information. Owing to the relatively low costs of the basic infrastructure, computer networks are becoming increasingly accessible in certain developing countries. The disparity between regions and between urban and rural areas is increasing. 12/

14. The new networks have the potential to democratize information and communications, owing to their interactive and participatory nature, but questions about women's access and use of them have been raised by women's groups. Evidence suggests that fewer women than men master the new technologies; for example, women make up only about 10 per cent of Internet users in the United States. They have unequal access to computers at school and at home, and the computer environment, including its languages and operating systems, is often hostile to women. 13/ A number of consumer groups and particular interest groups have criticized the existence of sexually explicit material and the depiction of violence against women on the Internet.

15. During preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, women made increasing use of cyberspace. As was the case in other global conferences, the

United Nations and the community of non-governmental organizations created several spaces and on-line instruments for exchanges among women's organizations. In order to help disseminate information on the Conference, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established a World-Wide Web site for the Conference on the Internet. UNDP also established and coordinated an on-line conference prior to the Conference, with a Web site, and a gopher server set-up. There was a large demand for these services: 160,000 requests for information came from 68 different countries, in contrast to only 11,000 such requests during the Social Summit in Copenhagen only six months previously.

B. The media workforce

16. Many countries have seen a dramatic increase in women's employment in the media in the past two decades. In some countries, the proportion of women journalists has doubled since the 1970s. Women have become increasingly visible in the media, particularly on television. However, behind the scenes, they continue to face barriers in their careers and have access only to a limited number of jobs. Women's employment in the media is a matter not only of equal access but also of impact on output in terms of greater diversification of images and messages, definition of news content and emphasis and diversification in the portrayal of women and men.

17. The discrepancy between women and men in training and employment opportunities persists. In a survey of 70 countries, women represented more than 50 per cent of the communications students in two thirds of the countries. Yet they held less than half of the media jobs. Although they have become more visible, particularly in radio and television over the past decade, as presenters, announcers and reporters, they are underrepresented in production, creative and technical jobs and in top management posts where they could have an impact on programme content and help ensure a more comprehensive coverage of women's priority concerns. In Western European broadcasting organizations, for example, women are employed in only 5 per cent of the technical jobs but in up to 50 per cent of the administrative, low-level secretarial and junior management jobs. 13/

C. Alternative media

18. In the past decade, most regions have seen a steady growth in women's alternative media in all forms, with the print media experiencing the earliest and fastest increase in all regions. (The term "alternative" can stand for both alternative use of the media and outside the mainstream media.) Independent alternative media controlled by women include written press, video, film, radio broadcasting and, increasingly, the new communication technologies. Traditional communication tools such as street plays, songs and dance programmes continue to be used to create social and political awareness among women. Women have created and used alternative and communicative channels to support their efforts, defend their rights, diffuse their own forms of representation and question the dominant model of mainstream culture. Alternative productions by and for women within the mainstream media have also increased.

19. Women's associations and non-governmental organizations own radio stations, publishing houses, video and movie production studios. Radio broadcasting remains one of the cheapest and most widespread form of media communication in developing countries. Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE), established in 1984, is one example of a successful feminist broadcasting initiative. Women's Feature Service (WFS), an independent press service on women, established in the mid-70s covers a multitude of news on and for women. Women's Television Network (WTN) in Canada was launched and awarded a speciality licence in 1994. With a workforce that is 98 per cent female, WTN has specialized in programmes that are of special interest to women. 14/

III. CHANGES IN THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

A. Progress and backlash in gender portrayal

20. Despite increased attention to the fair portrayal of women in the media, there are not many success stories to report. A variety of monitoring, enforcement and educational measures in many countries have brought some changes to the portrayal of women in the media. A few improvements can be observed in the increased numbers of female characters, female experts and news sources, and in the decreased segregation of women into traditional stereotyped roles. In many countries, the proliferation of media outlets in recent years has provided greater opportunity for productions, by, for and about women.

21. However, there has also been resistance and even a significant backlash. An analysis of sex roles and stereotypes indicates that women have been excluded or silenced in many media forms. Regular media monitoring in Canada and the United States of America shows relatively slow progress towards equal representation of women and men in the media. As part of a global monitoring exercise in 71 countries in January 1995, 15,500 stories were analysed; it was found that only 17 per cent of the people interviewed were women and only 11 per cent of the reports dealt with issues of special concern to women or contained any gender perspective. 11/

22. A key question is whether the media provide an accurate account of women's multiple roles in society. A second question is why does stereotyping persist despite two decades of research and action aimed at changing it? Final media output is shaped by professional norms and values, institutional structures and processes, perceptions of audience preferences and the demands of advertisers, which change slowly. Consequently, the portrayal of women and men in the media lags behind the reality of women's and men's actual lives and roles. The portrayal of women and men in the media mirrors socio-economic conditions which follow their own rules - in particular the rule of the market - but they are also an expression of political ideology. Images of women have been used as symbols of political aspirations and social change. 11/

23. The former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe provide an example of how stereotyped representation of women can be used as a vehicle for political ideology. There, the portrayal of women has gone from one extreme to the other: previous images of political and working women have been replaced, in the democratization process, by images of the fashion model, beauty queen and

mother. National versions of international glossy fashion and beauty magazines, previously non-existent, have conquered huge markets in only a few years. At the same time, there has been a surge in pornography. Pornographic publications reached their peak in 1991-1993, coinciding with complete freedom of the press. In Central and Eastern Europe, female images have been a profitable commodity in the new market economy. 15/

B. Commercials and advertisements

24. Advertising is one of the most influential institutions of socialization in modern society. Many studies confirm the persistence of highly stereotyped portrayals of women and gender relations in advertising. By design, messages transmitted through advertisements are usually based on thorough research of consumers' preferences and attitudes. Frequently, both the middle-of-the-road "clientele" approach addressing prevailing attitudes, and the avant-garde approach, projecting new images, can be offensive to those who find themselves represented in an unfair or stereotyped way. The need for monitoring and regulation of the images and language used by advertisers has been widely accepted in democratic societies. Many women perceive sexist stereotyping and the exploitation of women's bodies as insulting or degrading and complain that their concerns have not received enough attention by monitoring bodies which focus more on honesty, fairness and truthfulness than on gender portrayal. In many countries, consumers complain if they feel offended by a certain type of publicity. The number of complaints has increased in past years, in reaction to more aggressiveness in advertising, on one hand, and raised public concern and use of lobbying mechanisms, on the other.

25. Women represent an important market in today's commercial media environment. The 25-45 age group and especially professional and middle management women are the demographic groups whose purchasing power and influence is most sought. Advertisers traditionally reached them through women's magazines, but commercial TV channels with programmes targeting women have recently begun operation in the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and Latin America. The programmes feature advice, celebrity cults, tele-novelas and other entertainment programmes that reflect women in stereotyped roles.

C. Women in politics

26. As more women become active in politics, a fair and accurate portrayal of them in leadership positions has taken on particular relevance. The number of women in decision-making positions has steadily increased in the past years. In the twentieth century, 25 women have been elected heads of State or of Government, half of them since 1990, and more women are holding ministerial positions than ever before. In 1994, 9 per cent of parliamentarians and 5.6 per cent of cabinet ministers were women. Yet in the news, stories about influential women still focus on such exogenous factors as hairstyles and family situations. A recent study on the portrayal of women leaders in the media concluded that they are less visible than their male counterparts in the news. Although there seems to be little evidence that journalists employ simple sex stereotypes when covering new women leaders, it is undeniable that they

frequently give no credit to the women's credentials - their training and previous experience - but rather present them as outsiders who attained their status of power by chance, in an interim arrangement, or through family relations. When women leaders first rose to power, they were usually presented as agents of change whose appointment was a breakthrough for all women. Thus distinctive demands were put on them, which they had difficulty in fulfilling. 16/

D. Increase in the representation of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women

27. The representation in the media of violence against women, particularly sexual violence, has increased tremendously in past years. Television deregulation, combined with transborder satellite channels, has resulted in a 10-fold increase in televised pornography over the past decade in Europe. 17/ Many productions with explicit violent content including movies and television productions, and so-called "male sports", are taking up prime and major sending time and are targeting an exclusively male audience. An eight-country study on television violence in Asia conducted by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre classified 59 per cent of all the programmes studied as violent, with particularly high levels of violence found in India, Thailand and the Philippines. There has been a boom in sexually explicit material in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe. The production and marketing of this material has become an important business, with established links to forced prostitution and traffic in women, which is also increasing at an alarming rate and reaching global dimensions as a form of organized crime. Moreover, an increase in sexually explicit products on cyberspace has been reported, to which access is unrestricted and anonymous. 11/

28. The purported link between sexual exploitation and images of violence, including sexual violence, against women has frequently been debated. The issue of media effects is one of the most complex in communications research. Some psychological studies on the relationship between violence on the screen and violent impulses or behaviour in the viewers have found that exposure to scenes of gross violence makes people respond more violently in subsequent situations of aggression; others claim a cathartic effect.

29. One specific approach to the issue is to consider gender differences in reaction to violence on the screen. Women are less likely than men to watch violent programmes and films and are less likely to enjoy them if they do watch. They do not tolerate scenes of sexual violence against women. Whether they have themselves been the victims of violence or not, women have been found to become frightened by scenes of violence, with fear of rape being particularly common. Surveys and informal reports have found that women in all regions express high levels of anxiety about media violence. Women are especially concerned about the possible impact of violent messages on children. 18/

IV. MEASURES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AND REMOVING STEREOTYPES

30. Steps to improve women's access to the media and to remove stereotypes in the portrayal of women can be promoted either from within existing media structures or from outside. Media responsibility can be achieved on a voluntary, self-regulating basis or through legal measures. The scope and the effectiveness of both approaches need to be scrutinized.

A. Changes from within the media

1. Codes of conduct and self-regulatory guidelines

31. An urgency to formulate ethical codes for the media with relation to the portrayal of women has been generally recognized. The Beijing Platform for Action requests the mass media and advertising organizations "to develop, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women" 19/ and "that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women ... ". 20/

32. Within media structures, several types of codes of conduct exist already. Similar to the codes of ethics of numerous press agencies, the broadcasting industry's self-regulation codes contain a set of voluntary rules designed to respond to the public's concerns. While these measures are introduced by the media institutions themselves, they are often developed as a result of external pressure. Where self-regulatory bodies such as press councils exist, individuals can use complaints procedures if they feel discriminated against by a message. Journalists' organizations have adopted codes of conduct or practice that define ethics in journalism. Some national journalists' organizations have developed guidelines on non-sexist reporting in an effort to make their members more aware of gender issues. 21/ Some media organizations have in-house policies and controls, such as the ombudsmen at the Times of India. 22/ In general, few media have self-regulatory guidelines or policies relating to the portrayal of women. A 1993 survey of broadcasting companies in 23 countries found that of 75 responding organizations, only 12 per cent had any written policy statements on the matter. 23/

33. So far, self-regulatory mechanisms in the media have not been shown to be particularly effective. A code of conduct would include the pledge not to reproduce denigrating stereotypes and images of women and gratuitous gender-based violence, encourage the media actively to promote, from a gender perspective, a more positive image of women's multiple roles in society, and contain provisions to involve more women in decision-making on orientation, programming and content, in order to guarantee the effective implementation of the code. 12/ Codes of conduct apply at various stages of media production and dissemination and often include ethical codes of conduct established by organizations of media professionals, media enterprises, press agencies or broadcasting industries. There can be overlapping and duplication. Many do not include sanctions or disciplinary procedures, because they do not establish monitoring bodies or mechanisms of enforcement. Voluntary codes of conduct may

be sacrificed if economic considerations and profit are perceived to be at stake.

2. Employment of women

34. The main obstacles to the employment of women in the media are similar to those obstacles in other fields: stereotyped attitudes by male colleagues, including sexual harassment; gender differences in values and priorities as regards professional topics; salary differences; lack of self-confidence and ambition; career structures and working conditions that do not allow reconciling work and family responsibilities. A variety of measures, which are not specific to the media sector, would help to overcome those obstacles: organizing and lobbying; mentoring; changing in policies and attitudes, including setting concrete goals and targets; improving recruitment and selection, training, career development and working conditions; monitoring employment patterns. 24/ Of considerable importance is attaining a critical mass of women professionals, since this is likely to ensure an impact on choices made about content.

3. Organizations and networks

35. At all levels, from the local to the regional and international, women communicators have established both women-only and mixed professional associations and networks to advocate their concerns and act on gender issues in the media. Many initiated their activities only in the 1990s as a result of the increased presence of women in the media and awareness of women's rights. By organizing, women working in the media have been able to increase awareness of women's issues and provide training and mutual support to one another in order to foster self-confidence. One particular role and duty of women's professional media associations is to advocate for training, better working conditions, improved chances for promotion, equal pay and social benefits such as maternity leave and child-care facilities.

4. Training

36. Although more women are entering schools of journalism and undertaking communication and documentation studies, programmes and curricula have not necessarily become gender-sensitive. Women represent more than 60 per cent of the students enrolled in third-level mass communications studies in developed countries, 60 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 50 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and more than 40 per cent in Africa. Curricula and training material on gender stereotyping need to be developed for academic and vocational training in mass communications and journalism. There is also need for in-house training and awareness-raising on gender stereotyping for those already employed in the media.

B. Changes from outside the media

1. Legislation and regulations

37. The influence of the State on the media, through regulation and legislation, has always been questioned in terms of its possible interference with the fundamental freedom of expression, even when such intervention in a democratic society is meant to ensure fair access and representation. When private broadcasters operate through public channels to which access is regulated, the State exercises control and has the authority to grant licences. For instance, in Australia, the Broadcasting Tribunal, the independent statutory authority established under the Broadcasting Act to regulate broadcasting, can grant, renew, suspend or revoke broadcasting licences and make programme standards for both radio and television. 25/

38. In the case of transboundary satellite transmission and computer media, the question of control becomes more problematic; it can only be achieved by prohibiting the means of access to, for instance, technical devices such as receptors or satellite dishes. Access to information can be denied on grounds of interference with national interests. But if this is done, article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which expresses the right to receive information through any media and regardless of frontiers, is violated.

39. Some countries have taken active measures to combat stereotyped portrayals of women through legislation and media guidelines or codes of ethics. Complaints procedures for customers have been established, or self-regulation by the broadcasting industry has been proposed. Some countries have defined regulations with regard to equal opportunities in employment in the media. In the United Kingdom, the Government considered that creating a climate in which more senior posts in broadcasting would be held by women was the most effective way of ensuring that women were represented fairly and sympathetically. The Broadcasting Act was considered consistent with that objective. 26/ In Belgium, the Flemish public service broadcasting organization launched a policy of equal opportunity in 1989 and established a positive action plan, including training, awareness-raising and career measures. 27/ The European Commission, through its Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting, has launched a series of proposals with regard to training and career development, recruitment and working patterns for member States. 28/

40. The elimination of sexism from language is a basic tool for eliminating inequalities between women and men and discrimination against women. Language has a fundamental role in forming the social identity of an individual and mirrors ideas and perceptions. In 1990, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on the elimination of sexism in language, in which it recognized the interaction that exists between language and social attitudes and the important role played by the media in shaping attitudes. It encouraged the use of non-sexist language in the media. 29/

41. The question of imposing regulations on sexually explicit material has raised debate in many countries. Regulation is widely accepted in the case of child pornography or if physical violence is involved. Such activities fall also within the scope of broader legislation relating to assault or the age of

consent. Many countries act strongly on child pornography offences, including production and possession. For example, in 1985 Norway revised its Penal Code to cover serious, brutalizing and denigrating pornography. 30/ A few countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand, have taken new, stricter stands on television portrayal of violence against women. In New Zealand, the Government-appointed Committee of Inquiry into Pornography introduced legislation in 1992 that condemned violence and sexual violence against women and children. 31/ The use of regulations and the definition of "indecent" or "obscene" are strongly debated. Any strict regulation risks wiping out civil liberties and censorship can affect the freedom of speech of minority groups. The Canadian Supreme Court in a decision of February 1992 took a new course in its definition of obscenity. It recognized the harm to women, children and society arising from pornography as justified constraint on the free speech right of pornographers and concluded that the expression found in obscene material lay far from the core of the guarantee of free expression. 32/ Since sexual violence against women is a violation of women's human rights, the perspective is shifting away from the question of morality. The definition of violence against women in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life", provides a useful international legal instrument to be used in this respect. 33/

42. Ways to counteract images of sexual violence against women need further thought; legal action offers only one approach. Other measures would include public awareness campaigns, media education and specific action aimed at producers and consumers. Many women's media groups such as the Tanzania Media Women's Association and Women's Media Watch in Jamaica have already launched campaigns to address the problem. 34/

2. Independent monitoring and lobbying

43. As the media become more market-led, control by the State tends to diminish and more responsibility is given to the consumer. To benefit from this shift, independent media watch groups have been established in many countries. A prominent example is MediaWatch, a volunteer feminist organization in Canada which has played a fundamental role in reducing sexism in the media there. It focuses on specific action for media change such as using non-sexist and parallel language, depicting women and contemporary families realistically, ending the portrayal of women as sexual objects and offering media literacy training to empower audiences. MediaWatch monitors the media on a regular basis and presents its concerns at hearings of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

44. In another example, in order to counter offensive advertisements, the Instituto de la Mujer, a part of the Ministry for Social Affairs of Spain, has set up an "advertising observatory" with a free telephone line for women to use if they wish to complain that they find a particular advertisement offensive. Complaints are brought before a 15-member council which decides within 48 hours whether the advertisement should be withdrawn. If a two-thirds majority is in

favour, the advertiser is notified that unless the advertisement is withdrawn, legal action will follow. The Instituto de la Mujer has responded to accusations of censorship by underlining that its first priority is to work with advertisers on the reform of stereotypes. 35/

3. Media education

45. Media education includes education of the audience as well as the producers. The audience is understood to be an active social subject, capable of attaching significance to the messages and information received. In the United States a number of non-governmental organizations, including the National Telemedia Council Center for Media Education, offer workshops on the media.

46. In Latin America, one of the most systematic and wide-ranging initiatives in media education has been taken at the Centre for the Investigation of Cultural and Artistic Expression, in Chile, whose Education Programme for Active TV Viewing tries to inculcate a more critical grasp of televised messages and put pressure on broadcasters to rethink their messages. This approach has been applied in particular to tele-novelas, in a double educational effort: to make the audience aware of stereotypes, and to transmit critical comments to the producers. 36/

47. A first step in promoting critical awareness among producers of the subtle mechanisms of gender stereotyping in media content is monitoring; the second is education and training. A few countries undertake educational activity for the advertising industry. The Portrayal Department of the Netherlands Broadcasting Corporation provides audio-visual examples of gender stereotypes for producers. It also issues guidelines, hears complaints, monitors programmes, publishes reports and develops strategies to bring the issue of gender stereotypes to newsrooms. It involves the public in these activities. Its goal is to revise, enlarge and redefine journalistic news values. 37/

48. Beyond awareness campaigns, a systematic approach is needed to the development of curricula and training materials that highlight the nature and implications of gender stereotyping in media content.

4. Other incentives

49. In many countries, private and public interests have offered incentives such as awards to those who represent women fairly in the media. Women's film and video festivals are held all over the world to celebrate productions by women. In Canada, for example, there is the Women of the Year Award presented by Canadian Women in Communication, and other annual awards are given by MediaWatch. 14/ Swedish Television gives an annual Prix Egalia to the programme that best promotes equality between women and men. The most important prize on the European level is the European Commission's biennial Prix NIKI, for programmes that contribute to a better image of women in television, including children's programmes. Taking a different approach, women in media groups in German broadcasting select the most offensive programme for their prize Saure Gurke (sour cucumber).

C. Activities in the United Nations system

50. UNESCO's programme of communication activities for women has focused since its creation in 1981 on the portrayal of women in the media and women's participation in media work. While emphasizing the training of women in the communications professions and the promotion of women to higher-level posts, attention has also been given to assisting women's alternative media information networks and regional and national professional associations, establishing databases, and supporting women's groups and non-governmental organizations concerned with women and the media and promoting media education. An evaluation of the programme for the decade 1981-1990 acknowledged its achievements in operational terms but criticized the lack of research and analysis and a weakness in publicizing material that it had produced. 38/ In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNESCO organized an international symposium entitled Women and the Media: Access to Expression and Decision-making. It was the culmination of seven regional preparatory workshops held during 1994. The Toronto Platform for Action, an outgrowth of the Symposium and UNESCO's major contribution to the Fourth World Conference, contains detailed proposals on the elimination of stereotypes and on women's employment in the media, women's media networks and media training. It urged professional media organizations to address the needs of women journalists. It also asked media enterprises to develop guidelines on gender portrayal in cooperation with organizations of journalists and media professionals. 8/

51. The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) started its programme on women and communications in 1988 when it organized the International Consultative Meeting on Communications for Women and Development. In 1991, the Institute carried out a project involving Argentina, Colombia and the Dominican Republic on the development of communication material for women and development. INSTRAW has prepared a media handbook to assist people working in media programming and decision-making to become more aware of gender bias in the use of language and images. 39/

52. With regard to the linkage between media and violence, the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders underlined the important role that the media play in crime prevention. A workshop on the mass media and crime prevention issues examined the use of regulations and enforcement to control violence in the media, including violence against women, and its effectiveness. In its recommendations, it urged the United Nations to help the media encourage the development of appropriate measures and mechanisms which would contribute to the eradication of violence against women while reasserting the importance of a free press as part of the democratic process. 40/

V. CONCLUDING QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION

53. The following questions arising from consideration of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the area of women and the media are worthy of further consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session:

(a) Should the Government, through national machinery for the advancement of women and other mechanisms and in collaboration with the mass media, assist in defining codes of conduct by, for instance, providing detailed proposals?

(b) What goals should be expressed in such codes of conduct for the media: to avoid sexism in language, not to reproduce denigrating stereotypes and images of women and gratuitous gender-based violence, to promote a more positive image of women's multiple roles in society, to involve more women in decision-making on the orientation, programming and content of the media?

(c) What kind of enforcement mechanisms should be created to guarantee the effective implementation of such codes?

(d) How should special attention be given to ways of reducing or eliminating the representation of violence against women in line with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women?

(e) How can media education be used to educate the audience as well as the producers, particularly in raising an awareness of violence against women?

(f) How can organizing and networking on the part of women producers and journalists be encouraged and facilitated?

(g) How can the outreach of media monitoring groups, including advertisement monitoring groups, be improved and the enforcement of complaint procedures undertaken?

(h) How can communication training be made more gender-sensitive and on-the-job and in-house-training in all forms of the media be improved?

(i) How can public access to computer networks and to facilities for training women in the new communication technologies be best provided or improved in countries and areas with meagre access?

(j) What are the specific roles and responsibilities of the international community in the area of women and the media?

Notes

1/ "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995" (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, sect. 1.J, para. 234.

2/ Ibid., para. 236.

3/ Ibid., para. 243 (a).

4/ Ibid., para. 243 (c).

5/ "Influence of the mass communication media on attitudes towards the roles of women and men in present-day society" (A/CONF.94/BP.19).

6/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), paras. 206-208, 366-372.

7/ "Second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" (E/CN.6/1995/3/Add.8).

8/ Adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Symposium on Women and the Media: Access to Expression and Decision-making, held at Toronto (Canada), 28 February-3 March 1995.

9/ "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ..." (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, sect. 1.J.

10/ Gwen Lister, "Freedom of press and the role of women journalists in leadership positions in Africa", unpublished paper prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, 1995.

11/ Margaret Gallagher, "Lipstick imperialism and the new world order: women and media at the close of the twentieth century", unpublished paper, prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, December 1995.

12/ Sally Burch, "Women and the media in the era of new communications technologies", unpublished paper prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, October 1995.

13/ Margaret Gallagher, An Unfinished Story: Gender Patterns in Media Employment, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communication No. 110 (Paris, 1995).

14/ Liss Jeffrey, Progress in Canada Toward Women's Equality and the Media: Access to Expression and Decision-Making, report prepared for Status of Women Canada, background paper for UNESCO International Symposium "Women and the Media: Access to Expressions and Decision-Making", Toronto, 28 February-3 March 1995.

15/ Nadezhda Azhgikhina, "Woman as presented in the Russian media", unpublished paper prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Secretariat, December 1995.

16/ Pippa Norris, "A splash of color in a photo op: women leaders worldwide", in Women, the Media and Politics, Pippa Norris, ed. (New York, Oxford University Press, (forthcoming)).

17/ Council of Europe, Proceedings of the Seminar on Human Rights and Gender: The Responsibility of the Media, Strasbourg, 29 June-1 July 1994, p. 25.

18/ Margaret Gallagher, "Critical perspectives on the responsibility of the media vis-à-vis the notion of equality between the sexes", paper presented at a seminar of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Mass Media, entitled Human Rights and Gender: the Responsibility of the Media, held at Strasbourg, 29 June-1 July 1994.

19/ "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ..." (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, sect. I.J, para. 245 (a).

20/ Ibid., para. 245 (b).

21/ Bettina Peters, "Value and limits of a self-regulatory approach to gender equality in the media", paper presented at the UNESCO International Symposium on Women and the Media: Access to Expression and Decision-Making, held at Toronto (Canada), 28 February-3 March 1995.

22/ Vijayalakshmi Balakrishnan, "Indigenous social norms and women in Asian media", in Women's Tribune Center, Women Empowering Communication, Margaret Gallagher and Lilia Quindoza-Santiago, eds. (New York, 1994).

23/ Margaret Gallagher "Women and media, 1985-1994: a decade of development?", paper presented at the Preparatory Conference of the member States of the European Union for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Toledo, 14-16 April 1994.

24/ Gallagher, An Unfinished Story ..., p. 53.

25/ Second periodic report of Australia (CEDAW/C/AUL/2).

26/ National report submitted by the United Kingdom to the Division for the Advancement of Women in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, p. 92.

27/ National report submitted by Belgium to the Division for the Advancement of Women in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, p. 19.

28/ European Commission, Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting, "Recommendations for the promotion of equal opportunities, 1986-1991" (V/1356/94-EN).

29/ Council of Europe, Recommendation R(90)4: The elimination of sexism from language.

30/ National report submitted by Norway to the Division for the Advancement of Women in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, p. 114.

31/ See "Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography: Note by the Secretary-General" (A/50/456).

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